



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Sherry Henry:

Good afternoon,

Mexico continues to be the most important international visitor market for the State of Arizona. Additionally, an incredible 98 percent of our Mexican visitors come from Sonora! To keep the momentum and interest of this vital visitor marketing going, we encourage all of you to participate in the 2011 Arizona Showcase event.

Arizona Showcase is a fabulous opportunity to promote your product to more than 800 highly targeted consumers and 30 travel agents at a well-established event which generates more than \$25,000 of media coverage each year.

The registration deadline to participate approaches! However, we understand how difficult these economic times have been and have decided to offer a deep discount on registration for this year's Arizona Showcase!

Through the end of this week, Friday, September 9, we are offering a **\$500** savings on all supplier and corporate chain registrations. This significant savings will cover all of your travel expenses if traveling by ground, and will almost cover the cost of your flight if traveling by air.

Arizona Showcase will be held October 6, 2011 in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. For more information, please contact Mary Rittmann, director of Trade and Media Relations at 602-364-3730 or via email at mrtrittmann@azot.gov.

Have a great week,

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

New Update to AOT's Research Web site!

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov.

- [Airport Passengers June 2011](#)
- [State Parks Visitation July 2011](#)
- [2010 Overseas Visitation to Arizona](#)
- [2010 Canada Visitation to Arizona](#)
- [2010 British Columbia Visitation to Arizona](#)
- [2010 Ontario Visitation to Arizona](#)
- [2010 Alberta Visitation to Arizona](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Melissa Elkins, Research Manager, at 602-364-3716 or via e-mail at melkins@azot.gov.

Major Stars Stepping Out at Arizona Best Fest in Prescott

Wayne Newton, Jordin Sparks, Nils Lofgren, Jerry Riopelle, The Tubes Plus a 'Salute to Arizona' Lights up Mainstage Schedule

Big name Arizona-linked entertainers take the Mainstage at Arizona Best Fest in Prescott, September 16-18, headlining a three-day Arizona showcase of history, food, culture, science, and the future.

Historic downtown Prescott serves as the celebrated backdrop to the Arizona Centennial Signature event, which now boasts a Mainstage lineup featuring:

- Friday, September 16 — Virtuoso rock guitarist Nils Lofgren , and rock 'n roll veterans The Tubes
- Saturday, September 17 — American Idol-turned-superstar songstress Jordin Sparks and the ever popular rhythmic rock/blues artist Jerry Riopelle
- Sunday, September 18 — World renowned Arizona native, also known as 'Mr. Las Vegas' himself, Wayne Newton

Preceding Ms. Sparks on the Mainstage is a historical musical retrospective aptly titled "Salute to Arizona". The evening culminates with a festive fireworks display. Plus Arizona's Official State Historian Marshall Trimble and Arizona's Official State Balladeer Dolan Ellis also will perform on the Mainstage.

Arizona Best Fest Series leads an active calendar of Arizona Centennial Signature Events and Projects. The "best of" celebratory series moves to Tucson and later to Phoenix as it makes its three-city tour to Arizona's three territorial capitals. The Best of Arizona showcase celebrates Arizona's 100 Years, and comprises interactive historic pavilions, cultural villages, a western town, seven stages of entertainment, Arizona artists, food, wine, craft beer and much more. As the first Best Fest event in a series of three, the Prescott event is especially anticipated since the

city was the first Arizona Territorial Capital. The event encompasses the beautiful Prescott Courthouse Square in the city's historic downtown.

Another highlight of the three days of festivities, anticipated to attract visitors throughout Arizona, is the unveiling of the **USPS Arizona Centennial Commemorative Stamp** at Prescott's Courthouse Square Friday, September 16, at 4:00 p.m.

For all the latest information, including the entertainment schedule at Arizona Best Fest in Prescott, visit www.AZ100Years.org or the Prescott Daily Courier's dedicated online website for Best Fest <http://touristtreasuresaz.com/main.asp?SectionID=33>.

Upcoming Events & Activities

Montreal Media Mission

Date: September 27– 28

Location: Montreal, QB

Discover America Day - Canada

Date: October 3

Location: Toronto, ON

Arizona Showcase

Date: October 6

Location: Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico

Industry News

Arizona Restaurant Week Goes Statewide September 17 - 25!

More than 200 restaurants in 9 days? It's a deliciously daunting proposition. For the first time, Arizona Restaurant Week is going statewide so pack the car and ready your appetite. New to the dinner party, northern Arizona restaurants have grown into destinations of their own. We couldn't be more thrilled to have them participate in Arizona Restaurant Week. The list of restaurants is still growing, but we expect more than 200 of the state's top dining spots participate. For more information, visit www.arizonarestaurantweek.com.

Free Chocolate is OK but Wi-Fi is Better

When it comes to "comps" or "freebies," what do hotel guests want? Free chocolate, perhaps not. Free room upgrades and Wi-Fi, yes. So says HotelNewsNow.com, with the site quoting hoteliers saying those two are among top favorites. They are joined by a gym and free breakfast.

Meantime, a 2010 report from J.D. Power and Associates found the top five amenities sought by guests are:

- wireless Internet access;
- complimentary breakfast;
- bedding and pillow choices;
- pillow-top mattresses; and
- free parking.

“Deciding what should be given to guests for free can be a tough call. Deciding what should be ‘comped’ when hotels are still trying to pull out of a steep downturn makes that decision even more complex,” says the site.

Many hotels go beyond the ordinary. Apple Core Hotels has 24-hour cappuccino available in the lobby, for example. And Omni Hotels & Resorts provides a backpack stuffed with games to the families with children who stay at the property. (*Travel Mole, August 29*)

Grand Canyon Makes US News List of Best Adventure Destinations

When US News and World Report issued their “Best Adventure Vacations,” Hawaii claimed three of the 16 top spots. “The U.S. News and World Report’s Best Adventure Vacations ranking naming Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii Island in the top ten is a great recognition for our state,” said Mike McCartney, president and CEO of the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

The ranking cites Kauai’s “acres of misty rainforests, plummeting waterfalls and jagged cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean;” Maui’s “plethora of heart-pounding options from sea kayaking to mule riding;” and Hawaii Island’s “black volcanic deserts, tumbling waterfalls, lush rainforests and five volcanoes.”

“The natural beauty of our islands shape the many activities our visitors participate in, from soft adventure to the more extreme,” said John Monahan, president and CEO of the Hawaii s and Convention Bureau.

Here are the 2011-2012 award winners for “Best Adventure Vacations” in the US:

1. Yellowstone
2. Yosemite
3. Kauai
4. Maui
5. Puerto Rico
6. Grand Canyon
7. Hawaii, the Big Island
8. Outer Banks
9. Portland, OR
10. U.S. Virgin Islands
11. Key West
12. San Francisco
13. San Diego

14. Seattle
 15. South Padre Island
 16. Miami Beach
- (Travel Mole, September 1)

Data from American Express Business Insights Uncovers Overwhelming Preference for Less Frequent, Large Transactions in Retail, Travel

American Express Business Insights released its series of Q2 2011 Business Insights Spend Sights reports, which examine spending patterns across several key categories, US cities and demographic groups. Based on actual, aggregated spending data between April 1 and June 30, 2011, the Business Insights Spend Sights reports provide a year-over-year comparison of consumer and business spending across sectors such as luxury retail, dining and entertainment, and travel.

The latest Business Insights Spend Sights reports highlight the analytical capabilities of American Express Business Insights, which help companies identify trends and changes in spending behavior across a range of industries and consumer groups. By analyzing real spending, businesses can gain perspective into both emerging and sustained trends that impact their industries, and reveal opportunities to reach key customer segments.

Data Highlights Include:

Larger, Less Frequent Transactions Show Consumers are Spending Strategically on Big Ticket Items

While economic uncertainty continues to dampen overall consumer confidence, a new pattern of less frequent but measurable splurging has become evident among a range of customer groups in several categories. Consumers are spending more, but doing so in fewer transactions, indicating a preference for buying bigger and better even if that means doing so less often.

More specifically:

- **Luxury Retail Spend Sights:**

Amid the recession's lingering financial lessons, consumers continue to exercise restraint in their luxury apparel and accessories spend, with 50.5% of average consumers and 40.6% of ultra-affluent consumers posting less than three transactions on luxury fashion in Q2. In keeping with the new pattern of occasional splurges, however, consumers spent a surprising 10.1% more per transaction for luxury apparel and accessories in Q2, while making 6.2% fewer purchases, for a net total spending increase of 3.3%. In luxury jewelry spend, this trend was even more pronounced, as a 16.6% jump in average transaction size yielded an overall spending increase of 8.2% for Q2 – despite transaction volume being down 7.1%.

- **Travel Spend Sights:**

Similar to luxury retail, consumers made 3.7% fewer airline purchases in Q2, but spent 5.1% more per transaction, resulting in a 1.2% uptick overall. Interestingly, average transaction size for first-class tickets rose 14.5% in Q2. Consumers avoided the high-end route in lodging, however, with ultra-affluent consumers increasing spend by 51.8% on economy accommodations, resulting in overall spend on lodging holding flat. Despite this shift towards

value, the luxury segment didn't check out completely, as it gained 6.1% in spend during Q2, while upscale and moderate lodging decreased slightly, by 1.6% and 1.5%, respectively.

Value Dining Still Preferred by Most Consumer Groups; Regional Groups Make a Spending Statement in Retail and Lodging

- **Dining and Entertainment Spend Sights:**

Shifting consumer spending patterns in the restaurant sector support a prolonged and growing trend toward value dining. Previously, middle-tier eating establishments had felt the brunt of the "barbell effect," or the negative impact of consumers choosing the two ends of the spectrum – quick service or fine dining. However, in Q2, the value category posted the only gain in spend, at 3.5%. Fine dining spend decreased slightly, by 0.6%, and casual establishments continued to see a decline, with a 3.2% decrease in Q2.

- **Regional Spend Sights:**

Los Angeles' mature affluent consumers proved to be fashion plates in Q2, increasing spend by 25% on apparel and accessories. Their New York City counterparts increased spend by just 1% in this category, indicating a significant regional shift in fashion consumption. Miami's young adult affluents were bitten by the travel bug in Q2, increasing spend on lodging by 51%, compared to the same demographic groups hailing from Los Angeles, 4%; New York City, 16%; and San Francisco, 12%.

"Spending patterns since the recession indicate that value is top of mind for consumers, even among the most affluent customers," said Ed Jay, Senior Vice President at American Express Business Insights. "That said, the occasional 'splurge' pattern also shows that while consumers try to practice restraint, the prolonged economic uncertainty still cannot impede them from making a special purchase or two from the luxury brands that they love."

The data above and many more insights are included in four new American Express Business Insights Q2 2011 Spend Sights reports, available at www.americanexpress.com/businessinsights.
(Travel Industry Wire, September 2)

Reward Travel for Employees Makes a Comeback

Even during the recession, Jay Hagan refused to stop rewarding his top performers with free hotel stays. "It's really a relatively small part of our total employee budget and has such a big impact," says Hagan, CEO of DriveSavers Data Recovery in Novato, Calif. "It seemed even more important to continue to do it when things were slow."

Now, travel industry experts say, many of Hagan's peers are again rewarding employees as corporate profits have started to rebound and the avalanche of bad publicity about employee-incentive travel has dissipated. But while reward travel is returning, they say, the trips may not be as long or as lavish as they were before.

"The reality is, it's back because these programs work, especially in decentralized organizations," says Melissa Van Dyke, president of the Incentive Research Foundation.

"The programs are still motivating," she says. "They're still creating experiences that are memorable and meaningful. But some of the incentives that were there before, like round-trip

transfers or room gifts, aren't there anymore." For complete article, [click here](#). (USA Today.com, September 6)

Calendar of Events

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

Connect with the Arizona Office of Tourism!

Become a fan on Facebook! <http://www.facebook.com/arizonatravel>

Follow us on Twitter! <http://twitter.com/ArizonaTourism>